

Message Text

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PAGE 01 STATE 079931
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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY PARIS

WHITE HOUSE 0007

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

S E C R E T STATE 079931

NODIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PEPR, FR, GW

SUBJECT: FRENCH DISTRESS OVER OTRAG

REF; PARIS 09555

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1. WE APPRECIATE REFTEL REPORTING "KEEN ATTENTION" DEVOTED TO OTRAG BY SENIOR FRENCH OFFICIALS AND THEIR CONTINUING ANXIETY. WHEN AMB. DE LABOULAYE CALLED ON ASSISTANT SECRETARY VEST JANUARY 19, HE VOICED HIS PRO- FOUND PERSONAL SUSPICIONS ABOUT WHAT THE GERMANS WERE UP TO WITH OTRAG. MORE RECENTLY, GENERAL MERY REQUESTED AND RECEIVED FROM GENERAL BROWN A DIA APPRAISAL, DATED FEB. 17, 1978, OF OTRAG'S ACTIVITIES. THE APPRAISAL, BASED IN LARGE PART ON STATE REPORTS, CONTAINED NOTHING

TO EXACERBATE FRENCH CONCERNS-- ON THE CONTRARY -- BUT THE FACT THAT IT WAS REQUESTED SHOWS THAT THE ANXIETIES REPORTED REFTEL ARE BY NO MEANS CONFINED TO THE ELYSEE.

2. IT IS NOT ACCURATE TO SAY, AS ELYSEE SOURCE DID (PARA FOUR REFTEL), THAT US REPS TEND TO BE "SURE" OF INNOCENCE OF OTRAG'S ACTIVITIES. USG SIMPLY HAS NO EVIDENCE THAT OTRAG IS OTHER THAN WHAT IT PURPORTS TO BE OR THAT FRG IS USING OTRAG FOR SOME SINISTER PURPOSE. WE ARE OF

COURSE KEEPING CLOSE WATCH ON DEVELOPMENTS, AND WILL, AS APPROPRIATE, SHARE INFORMATION WITH OTHER INTERESTED GOVERNMENTS.

3. FYI - WE ARE FRANKLY CONCERNED THAT REPEATED VOICING OF FRENCH SUSPICIONS AND SPECULATIONS REGARDING OTRAG AROUND THE DIPLOMATIC CIRCUIT COULD UNINTENTIONALLY REFLECT NEGATIVELY ON THE COHESION OF THE ALLIANCE AND THE STATE OF FRENCH-FRG RELATIONS.

4. ACTION: EMBASSY SHOULD SUGGEST TO ELYSEE SOURCE THAT, IF FRENCH REMAIN CONCERNED, THEY MIGHT WISH TO APPROACH THE FRG DIRECTLY FOR A THOROUGH DISCUSSION OF OTRAG. EMBASSY MAY ADD THAT WE HAVE RAISED WITH FRG

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EMBASSY HERE IN LOW-KEY MANNER THE UTILITY OF PAYING GREATER ATTENTION TO THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ASPECTS OF OTRAG'S ACTIVITIES. IN ORDER TO REASSURE THOSE CONCERNED REGARDING THE NATURE OF OTRAG'S ACTIVITIES. COOPER

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NNN

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